



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service



# **Bodie Hills Sage-Grouse Habitat Improvement Project Scoping Document**

Bridgeport Ranger District  
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest  
Mineral County, Nevada and Mono County, CA  
Responsible Official: Jeremy Marshall  
District Ranger

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# **Bodie Hills Sage-Grouse Habitat Improvement Project**

## **Scoping Document**

The US Forest Service, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, Bridgeport Ranger District is planning a project to improve Bi-State sage-grouse habitat. This scoping document describes the purpose and need for the project, the project location, and a preliminary treatment proposal so that you can provide comments and help to improve the project. Instructions on how to comment and who to contact for more information are at the end of this document.

The responsible official for the Bodie Hills Project is Jeremy Marshall, Bridgeport District Ranger. Federal regulations allow the US Forest Service to exclude from documentation in an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS) categories of actions that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment, based on the agency's experience and knowledge. Unless extraordinary circumstances are found to exist, the proposed action falls under the category listed at 36 CFR 220.6(e)(6): *"Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction."*

### **Purpose and Need for the Project**

The purpose of the Bodie Hills project is to improve habitat conditions for bi-state sage grouse, a sensitive species on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and in the Forest Service Intermountain Region. Consistent with the 1986 Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan as amended<sup>1</sup>, including the 2016 Greater Sage-grouse Bi-state Distinct Population Segment Forest Plan Amendment<sup>2</sup> and conservation strategies defined in the Bi-State Sage-Grouse Action Plan<sup>3</sup>, the project is designed to:

- Reduce piñon-juniper expansion into sagebrush ecosystems and riparian areas,
- Reduce piñon-juniper stand conversion from Phase 1 (areas where scattered trees are present but shrubs and herbaceous plants dominate the vegetation) to Phase 2 (areas where trees co-dominate the vegetation with shrubs and herbaceous plants in the understory) and from Phase 2 to Phase 3 (areas where trees are the dominant vegetation and little to no shrubs or herbaceous plants exist in the understory),
- Increase sagebrush habitat connectivity, and
- Reduce availability of perches for sage-grouse predators.

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<sup>1</sup> 1986 Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan available at [http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5143054.pdf](http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5143054.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Greater Sage-grouse Bi-state Distinct Population Segment Forest Plan Amendment Record of Decision available at [http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa\\_project\\_exp.php?project=40683](http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=40683)

<sup>3</sup> 2012 Bi-State Action Plan: Past, Present, and Future Actions for Conservation of the Greater Sage-grouse Bi-state Distinct Population Segment, available at [http://www.ndow.org/uploadedFiles/ndoworg/Content/public\\_documents/Nevada\\_Wildlife/Bi-State%20Action%20Plan.pdf](http://www.ndow.org/uploadedFiles/ndoworg/Content/public_documents/Nevada_Wildlife/Bi-State%20Action%20Plan.pdf)

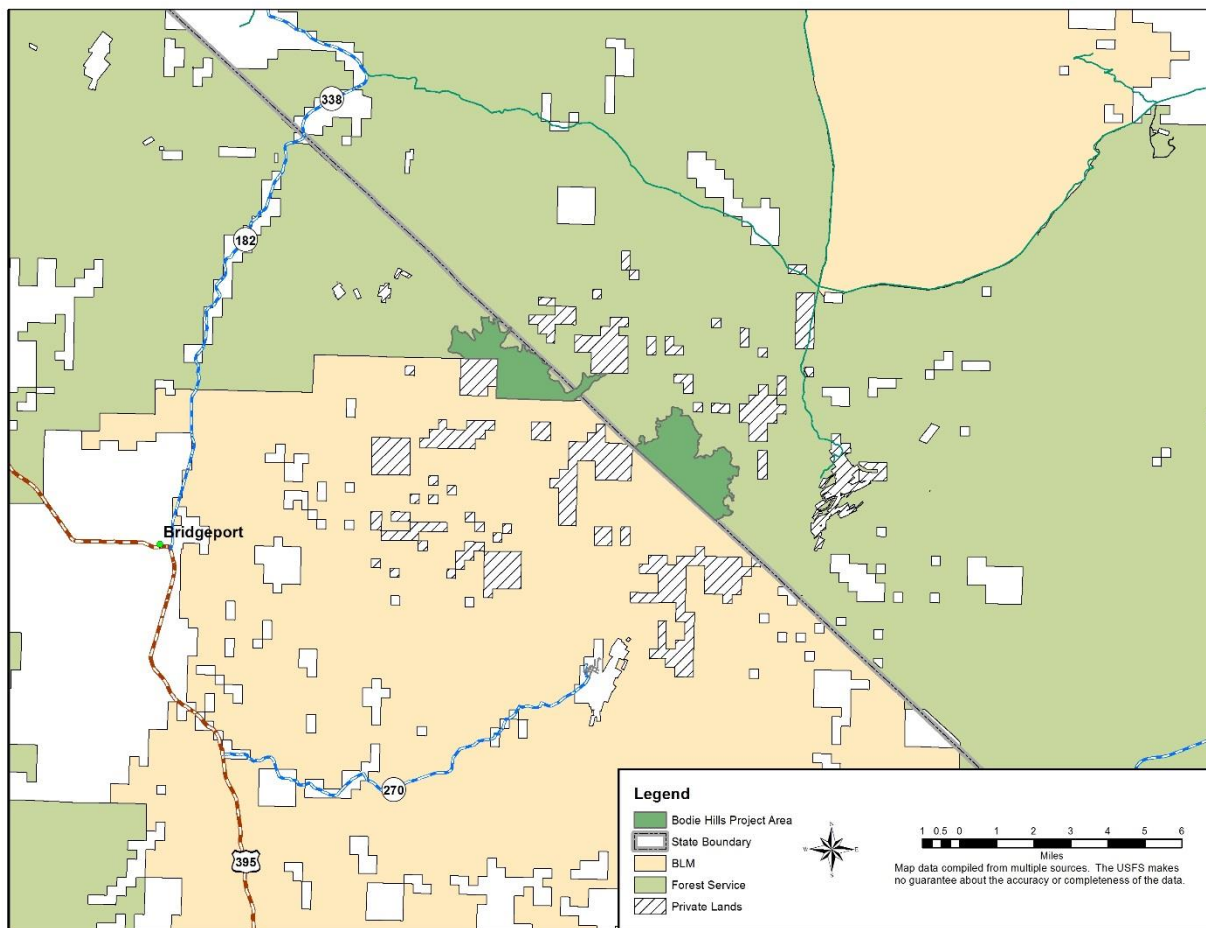
The project is needed because piñon and juniper trees in the project area are encroaching upon nesting, brood-rearing, and winter habitat for the sage-grouse and decreasing sage-grouse habitat quality and availability.

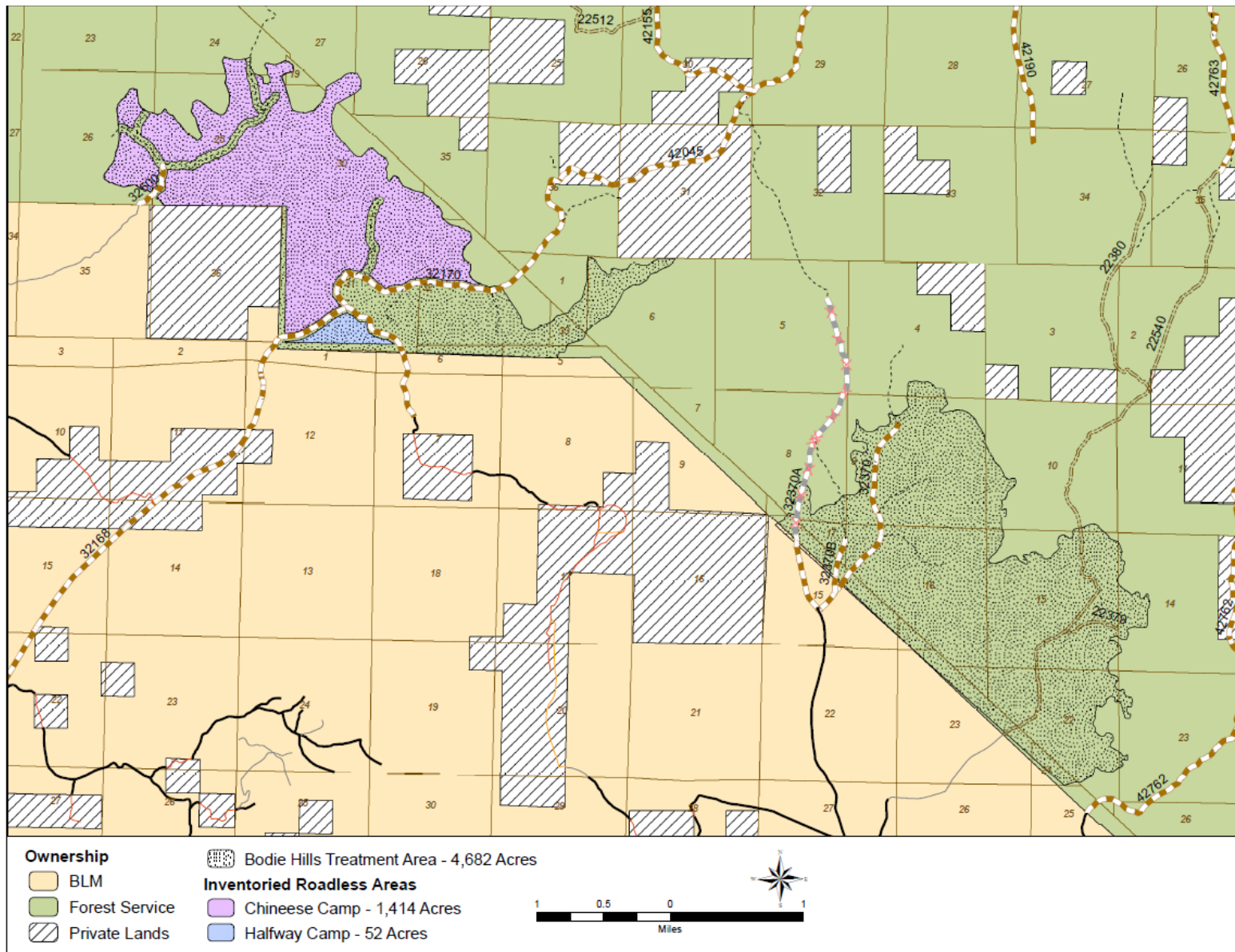
The Bodie Hills project is a critical part of the Bi-State Action Plan, a comprehensive interagency strategy to provide for the long-term conservation of the Bi-State sage-grouse and its habitat through the implementation of habitat improvement treatments, administrative actions, research, and monitoring.

## Project Location

The project is located on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, Bridgeport Ranger District, in Mineral County, Nevada and Mono County, CA (Map 1). The project area includes approximately 4,682 acres of land. Approximately 31% (1,466 acres) of the project area falls within two inventoried roadless areas (IRAs): Chinese Camp (1,414 acres of the 19,550 acre IRA) and Halfway Camp (all of the 52 acre IRA) (Map 2).

**Map 1. Project location.**





**Map 2. Bodie Hills proposed treatment areas and inventoried roadless areas.**

## **Preliminary Proposal**

The Forest Service proposes to remove piñon pine and juniper on up to 4,682 acres within the Bodie Hills project area. Treatment methods would be limited to hand cutting with lopping and scattering in Phase 1 and Phase 2 woodland encroachment areas. Treatment would not occur in Phase 3 or higher density areas, rock outcrops where trees exhibit old-growth characteristics, in areas where little to no ground vegetation currently exists, or in the bottom or sides of steep drainages. Trees exhibiting characteristics of persistent woodlands and old-growth characteristics would not be cut. During hand cut, lop, and scatter work, hand crews would use chainsaws to cut down piñon and juniper trees. Depending on the size of the trees, branches would be lopped (cut) off the trunk of the tree and scattered so all wood and branches are within 18 inches of the ground. Trees and branches would generally be left on site to decompose naturally.

## **How to Comment**

The Forest is seeking comments to help improve this project. Comments would be most helpful if received by October 2, 2017. Comments can be submitted by mail, over the phone, in person, or by email.

Written comments should be submitted to the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, Bridgeport Ranger District, Attn: Jeremy Marshall, HC62 Box 1000, Bridgeport CA 93517. Oral and hand-delivered comments must be provided at the Responsible Official's office during normal business hours (8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays). Telephone comments can be submitted to the Responsible Official at 760-932-7070.

Electronic comments must be submitted to [comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabe-bridgeport@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabe-bridgeport@fs.fed.us) in an email message, or attached in portable document format (.pdf) or Word (.docx) format.

Comments, names, and contact information of those who comment will be part of the public record for this project. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, the District will not be able to send further project information to anonymous commenters.

## **For More Information**

This information is also available online at [http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa\\_project\\_exp.php?project=52199](http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=52199).

For more information, please contact Monique Nelson, interdisciplinary team leader, at [moniquenelson@fs.fed.us](mailto:moniquenelson@fs.fed.us) or 775-355-5316.